



Review

Alcohol and drinking cultures in Vietnam: A review



Martha Lincoln*

Prevention Research Center, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 180 Grand Avenue, Ste. 1200, Oakland, CA 94612, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 1 July 2015

Received in revised form 7 October 2015

Accepted 23 October 2015

Available online 10 November 2015

Keywords:

Alcohol
Drinking
Public health
Anthropology
Vietnam

ABSTRACT

Background: Epidemiological data suggest that national levels of alcohol consumption have increased rapidly in contemporary Vietnam; concomitantly, social and public health harms associated with alcohol use are on the rise.

Methods: Over the last decade, a research literature on alcohol use in Vietnam has begun to develop.

Results: A consideration of this literature indicates lines of analysis to be extended and gaps to be filled.

Conclusion: This synopsis provides an overview of the major trends that studies have addressed, evaluates the state of research to date, and suggests avenues for further research on alcohol use in this newly middle-income nation.

© 2015 Elsevier Ireland Ltd. All rights reserved.

Contents

1. Introduction	1
2. Methods	2
2.1. Review of social science literature	2
2.2. Review of public health research literature	2
3. Results	2
3.1. Alcohol use	2
3.2. Drinking culture(s)	3
3.3. At-risk populations	4
3.4. Drinking contexts	5
3.5. Alcohol-associated harms	6
4. Summary	6
4.1. Research directions	6
4.1.1. Gender	6
4.1.2. Globalization/"Westernization"	7
4.1.3. Institutional capacity	7
Contributors	7
Role of funding source	7
Conflict of interest statement	7
Acknowledgements	7
References	7

1. Introduction

Macroeconomic growth is typically framed as an important input to the improvement of living standards in low- and middle-income countries, but economic development is not necessarily

an unqualified good from a public health standpoint. Research on alcohol use in low- and middle-income countries suggests that economic development tend to be associated with increased alcohol consumption, entailing a range of negative consequences for public health (Schmidt and Room, 2012). Vietnam furnishes an important case to study patterns of shifting alcohol use trends in a lower-middle-income country of the Global South. Vietnam's experience with changing patterns of alcohol consumption have implications for settings with similar demographic, social, and economic

* Tel.: +001 5108097433.

E-mail address: martha.lincoln@gmail.com

characteristics; of course, the nation's successes and failures will also be consequential for its substantial and increasing population, currently some 92.5 million citizens. Subpopulations that differ along axes of socioeconomic status, ethnic identity, gender, and rural or urban location are also important as cases for comparative analysis and in their own right.

Over the last thirty years, Vietnam has experienced rapid and comprehensive sociocultural change impelled by the transformation of a command economy to "a market economy with socialist orientation" that began in 1986. Previously dependent on subsidies and trade with member countries of the socialist bloc, Vietnam has become increasingly integrated into regional and global economies. Market liberalization, free trade, private ownership, the normalization of political relations with the United States, and the conversion of collectively held institutions to opportunities for private profit have contributed to rapid economic growth.

Economic reform has also brought a sea change in established frameworks for identity, behavior, and cultural practices. During the socialist period (1945–1986), access to money, private property, and basic consumer goods in Vietnam was limited by the high prevalence of poverty and the protocols of a state subsidy economy, not to mention decades of almost continuous armed conflict against foreign powers. In the early 1980s, Vietnam initiated a series of reforms aimed at reviving the declining economy; these measures have been widely appraised as a success. In Vietnam's post-reform period, increased access to money, mobility, and commodities has radically changed consumption behavior. While the nation's population remains concentrated in rural areas, rural-to-urban migration has become an increasingly significant trend, and Vietnam's experience of urbanization has been among the most intense in Southeast Asia. An urban middle class has come into existence (c.f. King et al., 2008), and increasing socioeconomic inequity is replacing the former emphasis on egalitarianism.

Vietnam's economic transition is understood to influence an array of behaviors and contexts that influence public health outcomes, including alcohol consumption. Within the last fifteen years, researchers have noted an alarming appreciation in rates of alcohol consumption in Vietnam, and have tended to interpret this trend as an epiphenomenon of increasing wealth and social openness. Alcohol use is understood to contribute to Vietnam's increasing national burden of chronic diseases (Hoy et al., 2013), as well as to other negative public health outcomes—driving after drinking, traffic crashes, injuries, intimate partner violence, and sexual risk behaviors.

However, the research base on alcohol use in this national setting remains less than robust. The literature currently lacks topical breadth and has yet to deliver a comprehensive analysis or hypothesized causal model of Vietnam's changing patterns of alcohol use. Limitations on knowledge limit opportunities for context-responsive policy setting and the development of effective public health interventions.

2. Methods

Sources are drawn from two major disciplinary categories, social sciences and public health. Strategies for generating references differed by discipline, and methods used in retrieving sources from these two literatures reflect these distinctions.

2.1. Review of social science literature

To date, no book-length ethnography has addressed alcohol use in contemporary Vietnam, but references to the social and ritual use of alcohol commonly occur in anthropological and sociological accounts, as well as in a select number of historical sources. I reviewed approximately twenty-five recently published ethnographic monographs and other social scientific texts on diverse topics in contemporary Vietnam (2000–present), using search terms including "alcohol," "drinking," "beer," "wine," and "spirits"; this breadth reflected an attempt to capture episodic mentions of alcohol-related issues, given the unsystematic attention to these themes in the

social science literature. I conducted a similar search in area-specific disciplinary journals.

2.2. Review of public health research literature

Within the last fifteen years, public health research on alcohol use and associated health risks in Vietnam has grown significantly and now comprises a thematically and methodologically broad literature that can be retrieved through more traditional keyword-based search methods. To identify these reports, I conducted a search of relevant research databases (PubMed, Google Scholar, AnthroSource, JSTOR, and ProQuest) for research articles, review articles, theses, and dissertations published in English during the period 2000–2015 that contain the search terms "Viet*" and "alcohol" in any field.

Publications were reviewed for content, methods, and implications. In the case of particularly comprehensive and highly rated research resources, I reviewed bibliographic references to identify additional relevant publications. Major findings and recommendations were abstracted and compiled for analysis. Review of the publication content supported the development of a literature review that summarizes major findings as well as an assessment of current state of research on alcohol use in a country where alcohol-related public health risks are believed to be rapidly increasing.

3. Results

The major themes that emerged from the review of research include alcohol use, drinking culture, at-risk populations, drinking contexts, and alcohol-associated harms. In the following review, I summarize substantive findings in each of these areas, characterize the state of alcohol research to date, and conclude by suggesting potential directions for future investigation.

3.1. Alcohol use

Sources provided descriptive statistics on average per capita consumption, quantity/frequency of alcohol use, and rates of problematic consumption of alcohol among adults. The WHO's 2014 Global Status Report on Alcohol suggested that average per capita consumption for adults who drank had almost doubled from 2003–2005 to 2008–2010, increasing from 3.8 to 6.6 L of pure alcohol (inclusive of both recorded and unrecorded products; WHO, 2014). This rate is slightly above the global rate of per capita alcohol consumption per annum, which is estimated at 6.2 L (WHO, 2014). Though WHO data indicate a dip in alcohol use rates in Vietnam during the postwar 1980s, a net increase of 28% was found between the early 1970s and 1996 (Kaljee et al., 2005). Studies using other measures found that median consumption among male rural alcohol users in one province of North Vietnam was 8.9 standard drinks per week; this study also found a 35% prevalence of problematic drinking among males surveyed (Giang et al., 2013). Per 2004 AUDIT data, the prevalence of problematic consumption nationally was 25.5% in men and 0.7% in women (Giang et al., 2005)—a gap between sexes that is considerably larger than those reported in other national settings (Giang et al., 2008).

However, national alcohol consumption may be substantially underestimated owing to the ubiquity of home-brewed alcohol, especially in rural areas (Health Strategy and Policy Institute, 2006). Home brewing has long been practiced in Vietnamese communities. During the colonial era, the French administration's imposition of a monopoly on alcohol production generated intense resentment and resistance in the form of legal appeals, clandestine alcohol manufacture, and violence (Peters, 2012; Sasges, 2012). Home alcohol production was evidently an important enough institution that it "withstood at least two attempts in the twentieth century by outside cultures to dismantle it" (Luu et al., 2013).

In 2007, sources estimated that private homes produced some 250 million liters of alcohol annually (Lâm, 2008). High rates of home alcohol production suggest that drinking at home or in neighborhood/community settings may also represent a space where problematic use of alcohol should be studied, and that qualitative

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7504218>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7504218>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)